

# **Could Have Been Verse**

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This is for you, Carrie.

**WARNING!**

May contain traces of serious writing.



## The Missing Moon



Midnight, in the middle of June.  
I hope sleep arrives very soon,  
But the sky's very clear  
And I must say I fear  
That someone has stolen the moon!

We're not due a lunar eclipse.  
Has Nature played one of her tricks?  
I'm suspicious, in truth,  
Of the cat on the roof,  
Who's sitting there licking its lips.

## Social Media and the Fruit Fly

*Information and communication technology has transformed our lives over the past few decades and a key development has been the emergence of social media. The immediacy of communication has fundamentally altered our time perception. This should be really good news for species that only have short life cycles, like the fruit fly.*

The fruit fly is a busy thing,  
She doesn't have much time.  
She has to do her whole life's work  
Before it's half past nine!

Drosophila is her real name,  
And that is just so wrong -  
She can never introduce herself,  
For it would take too long!

She'd really love to stop and chat -  
The chance just never comes.  
There's only time to multiply -  
She has to do her sums!

Social media is the answer,  
And she can take her pick -  
Use Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn  
To say stuff really quick.

Although she'll never know her kids  
(They'll barely get to meet),

She'll tell them her life story  
In just a single tweet!

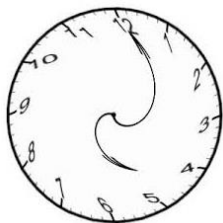
She'll tell them stuff like where and how  
To fly and eat and drink.  
Their whole life is ahead of them -  
That's shorter than you think!

## The Time Travel Paradox

*You might think you can't make things unhappen (i.e. you can make an omelette out of an egg but you can't make an egg out of an omelette), but what if you could? There's a time travel paradox - the danger that someone could go back in time and change the course of history, e.g. by killing their grandfathers before they're born. Given the opportunity, I think all time travellers would in fact change stuff. It could be that they're here among us now and they're itching to change the course of history. We've got to stop them! Basically, we need to make sure they don't do anything! My proposal is to get everyone to do absolutely nothing until such time as we can identify the pesky time-travellers and get this sorted out!*

*I intend to go into politics on a global level, advocating lethargic solutions, incentivising idle people who are inclined not to make anything of their lives. I think it's imperative that we save our future by doing absolutely nothing for as long as it takes to resolve the situation. I intend to set a good example by having a nice lie-down right now, and I suggest you do the same! Save our future - do nothing!*





If time travel actually happens,  
Then everything really unravels.  
I won't write no more,  
You've heard it before -  
I wrote it next week on my travels.



Are you a head, heart or hands person? Everyone, it seems, is ruled by one of these, or a combination of them. For a limited period, I'm going to be ruled by my left knee, because, hey, the head, heart and hands have been monopolising things for long enough.

## To Boldly Go

*Astronauts wishing to join NASA's space-flying corps have to submit to a gruelling application process - probing interviews and evaluations to discover which candidates have what the writer Tom Wolfe referred to as the 'right stuff'. Once selected, they undergo a rigorous two-year training program.*

I'd love to be an astronaut,  
Although the training's tough.  
I don't mind floating weightlessly,  
I'll do the maths and stuff.

I'll study the Russian language  
And meteorology;  
I'll dive into tanks of water  
And learn astronomy.

And then when I'm trained and ready,  
I'll wave to all you guys  
Before my NASA rocket ship  
Propels me to the skies.

I'll aim for a lunar crater  
Or maybe fly to Mars  
Or sail off past Andromeda  
And head for distant stars.

There's just one thing can stop me now,  
Before I say goodbye -  
A minor little phobia:  
I'm much too scared to fly!



If penguins were judged by their ability to climb trees, they would go through their lives believing they were useless. That's not right. From now on, I'm going to judge *everyone* by their ability to climb trees. It's only fair to the penguins.

## To Bee or not to Bee

*Bees pollinate over 80% of all flowering plants, including 70 of the top 100 human food crops. Over 270 species of bee have been recorded in Britain alone. Not all bees are social, but honey bees lead complex lives, where development and survival are dependent on social interaction. It is believed that William Shakespeare was a beekeeper.*



Some bees make nests in hollow trees,  
Some just live in hives,  
Some burrow deep down under ground,  
And stay there all their lives.

They're sophisticated creatures,  
It's hard to understand  
The way they just cooperate,  
The way they lend a hand.

I never did identify  
The one that went for me.  
It neither was a burrower  
Nor a lender bee!

## The Lie

So this is a harvest from a seed of doubt,  
I guess I'm lucky that I found you out.  
You'll feast no more on the fruit of lies.  
I see you now through your sad disguise.

You say it's nothing, just a small mistake,  
But one little lie is all that it takes.  
It hurts real bad when you tell a lie,  
But it hurts me more that my trust will die.

I may forget it but I don't know when,  
For how can I ever trust you again?  
I may forgive you but I don't know how,  
For why should I ever believe you now?

## Carrie's Magic Flask of Tea



One day my luck just disappeared  
And life became all wild and weird.  
Way past the point of no return,  
I didn't know which way to turn.  
The thing that served to rescue me  
Was Carrie's magic flask of tea.

So word got round and doctors swore  
This liquid gold could be a cure  
For common colds and leprosy,  
Mad cow disease and dysentery.  
Now all you need for Housemaid's Knee  
Is Carrie's magic flask of tea.

The flags of peace were soon unfurled  
And love broke out around the world.  
They sang and danced in South Sudan,  
Iraq and Greece and Kazakhstan.  
The thing that set these people free

Was Carrie's magic flask of tea.

The CIA and KGB  
Tried hard to get the recipe.  
They sent their spies to Golders Green  
And every tea shop in between.  
But no one solved the mystery  
Of Carrie's magic flask of tea.

When I'm old and the end is nigh  
And I see angels flying high,  
I won't need cash or mobile phone;  
My credit card can stay at home.  
The only thing I'll take with me  
Is Carrie's magic flask of tea.



## The Swallow

Here is  
whiteness  
a token of blue  
flat as a plate  
deep as a slice of the ocean

Turning  
shimmering plate  
yawning flat  
as daylight starts to taper

Breathing low  
waking ripples glide

An asterisk of wings  
high and blue-pointed  
stretching wide a tiny throat  
perhaps a scatter of silver notes  
to free the ears from the past

The colours will return  
though the songs are dying  
fast

A soft flurry of wings  
and gone



The polar ice caps may be in danger of melting and causing the oceans to rise. Save the Arctic. Donate ice.

## Andromeda

You haven't got time for a snooze,  
I'm afraid I've got some bad news.  
Get ready, hold onto your hats,  
Go gather your dogs and your cats!

Some people will panic, it's true -  
We'll keep it between me and you:  
Andromeda's about to collide -  
We cannot escape if we tried!

It could be goodbye, au revoir,  
So light up a big fat cigar!  
And I think we might have the time  
To open a bottle of wine.

The experts are now all agreed,  
It's coming towards us at speed.  
Though it's getting closer each hour,  
We don't have to lie down and cower.

No, let's act before it arrives,  
Let's do stuff to help us survive.  
I'll go out and get a tin hat  
I don't want my head to go splat.

We must be resourceful and shrewd -  
We'll stock up on water and food.  
And when it's about to collide,  
Get under a table and hide!

How long have we got, you may ask,

To do all these onerous tasks?  
I cannot allay all your fears....  
We've only got four billion years!!

## **That'll be Me**

When the grim reaper has caught up with me  
Please scatter my ashes upon a calm sea.

When the gulls, fishing for crabs, have all flown  
And when they stop fighting and soar off alone,  
That'll be me.

When the waves gather and curl and unfurl  
And when they give up and dissolve into foam,  
That'll be me.

Don't lay me in wood, all lacquered to last.  
I don't want fine lace or handles of brass.  
When I'm adrift and don't answer my name,  
Let all the sea birds and fish lay their claim.  
When all the laughter has drained out of me  
Please scatter my ashes upon a calm sea.

Then when you're taking a stroll in the sand  
And breezes send whispers from ocean to land,  
That'll be me.  
You may hear lapping of waves on the shore;  
You may feel spray on your face and your hands:  
That'll be me.

## Beans on Toast

*I'm not exactly a resourceful cook. Left to my own devices in the kitchen, I'll invariably make my signature dish, beans on toast, pretty much every time. The most "gourmet" I get is when I add a little grated cheese. You can survive on beans on toast, right?*



He ate nothing but beans and some toast.  
"I can survive!" he would boast.  
But to his disgust, he choked on the crust,  
Killed by the beans and some toast!

## Sand Creek

*This poem refers to the 1864 Sand Creek Massacre, in which a contingent of Colorado militia slaughtered over 150 Arapaho and Cheyenne, mostly women and children, at a settlement in eastern Colorado. Believing the US soldiers would not fire upon anyone standing under the Stars and Stripes, Cheyenne leader Black Kettle mounted the flag above his tipi in the middle of the village. The poem is written from Black Kettle's perspective during the night before the atrocities.*

In the year of 1864  
In the moon of popping trees  
On the banks of the Arkansas  
When the water starts to freeze

The stars have gone out one by one  
The moon's turned pale and weak  
The spirits will not gaze upon  
My children at Sand Creek

The Stars and Stripes are flying high  
Above me as I sleep  
In a dream I hear my children cry  
Why is it that they weep?

The sky's been dark since war began  
Please let us live in peace  
I reach out for the white chief's hand  
The killing now must cease

Is that death's wing that flashes past  
All draped in silver light?  
And do I hear a trumpet blast  
For souls to start their flight?

The stars have gone out one by one  
The moon's turned pale and weak  
The spirits will not gaze upon  
My children at Sand Creek

Tonight the lights are going out  
For the children at Sand Creek.



## **We Shall Never Surrender**

*The National Service Act 1948 imposed conscription on all males aged between 18 and 41 who had to register for "National Service" long after the Second World War had ended. As my dad served in the army, I just assumed he was away fighting for our country.*



I thought dad was the bravest man  
The world had ever seen.  
He crossed the sea to Germany  
To fight for England's queen.

I thought he'd got the Charing Cross  
During the long campaign;  
I think I must have got it wrong -  
It's where he caught his train.

Turns out he'd got his dates all wrong  
And never found the war.  
The Germans refused to fight him  
In 1954!

## My Doomy Gloomy Universe

*I try to protect people from my bad days, but that doesn't mean I can protect myself from them.*

*Robin Williams once said: "I think the saddest people always try their hardest to make people happy because they know what it's like to feel absolutely worthless and they don't want anyone else to feel like that."*

Things are seldom what they seem,  
Nice things disappear in steam.  
You may think I'm just plain perverse  
In my doomy gloomy universe,

Write some words, I'll twist them round  
Until their meaning can't be found,  
It's not a blessing, it's a curse,  
This doomy gloomy universe.

If something's good I'll make it bad.  
I'll turn the happy into sad  
And if it's bad I'll make it worse  
In my doomy gloomy universe.

I can't be cheered up any more;  
All your jokes are threats of war.  
You won't get through while I'm immersed  
In my doomy gloomy universe.

Round here somewhere there's a key,  
So please don't worry, I'll get free.  
I'll put this nightmare in reverse -  
Stupid doomy gloomy universe!



You know that look in someone's eyes when you're sitting at a table with them and they're totally mesmerised by your charm, wit and intelligence? Me neither.

## The Headless Pigeon

*A friend of mine told me she'd found a headless pigeon in her garden and couldn't understand how such a tragic event could have occurred. After examining it, she said that, apart from the missing head, everything else seemed just fine!*



There was a young pigeon called Fred,  
Who woke up and thought he was dead!  
It gave him a scare,  
He looked everywhere -  
The fact is he'd just lost his head.

Had he lost it during a fight  
With a mad and brutal red kite?  
Perhaps a strong breeze  
Or maybe a sneeze  
Had blown it away in the night?

A head doesn't grow back with time.  
You can't get a new one online.  
But Fred didn't care  
And flew in the air,  
Since ev'rything else felt just fine!

## **The Olive Branch**

With listing ship I search for land;  
The sails look sad and torn.  
The compass cannot offer me  
Safe passage through the storm.

I'm tossed upon the sea of life  
And all the charts are lost.  
I send a dove to look for land  
With all my fingers crossed.

An olive branch is all I ask,  
Like Noah in the flood.  
But on the deck are feathers strewn,  
And a spot or two of blood.

## The Martian

*I think if you were abducted by aliens, the best strategy would be to wander around making very loud gargling noises until they conclude that you're not the intelligent life form described in their brochures. Then they'll probably just send you back with some kind of microchip in your head.*

*But why haven't we seen more evidence of extraterrestrial life? The Fermi paradox, named after physicist Enrico Fermi, is the apparent contradiction between the high probability estimates for the existence of extraterrestrial civilisations, on the one hand, and the total lack of evidence for this, on the other. If the universe is 13 billion years old and if there are billions of stars with planets around them that might have developed intelligent civilisations, then... where is everybody?*

If a Martian should land here and capture me,  
I would need a good plan, I think you'll agree.  
Yes, I'd panic a bit, but then I'd regroup  
And make a loud noise like I'm drowning in soup -  
If he'd been expecting intelligent life,  
He might just give up and go home to his wife.

It could be this planet is simply a zoo,  
Where extraterrestrials watch me and you.  
I expect they're laughing but maybe they're not,  
I bet there's a queue and it costs quite a lot.

I think they'll decide that our progress is stuck  
And they don't have the time for us to catch up.

I'm being quite rude here, I have to confess,  
But I don't think E.T. will keep our address,  
For he and his friends will be in no doubt -  
Our behaviour suggests we'll wipe ourselves out.

But none of us know what future awaits...  
The truth is I hope that we all become mates.





The M31 galaxy is moving towards the Milky Way at about 250,000 miles an hour. Cover your head and do not use an elevator.

## Eric and the Christmas Orange

Sprawled on the Sunday Telegraph,  
A blanket round his knees,  
He coughed and waved and said 'Hey, Guv,  
Pound for an orange, please?'

It startled me to hear his voice.  
I'm sure you would agree -  
An orange seemed the oddest choice.  
Why not a cup of tea?

I don't know why I lingered there  
As buses came and went.  
I heard a tale so sweet and rare  
Inside his makeshift tent.

Eric told me of one winter time  
When he'd been left alone -  
Kids gathered round a Christmas pine  
Inside the children's home.

An orange hung from every tip,  
One fruit for every child;  
While all around him licked their lips,  
He watched in awe and smiled.

Four years old and just arrived,  
He had no friends as such;  
He stood amongst them, mesmerised,  
But didn't dare to touch.

Before too long the tree was cleared,

The harvest all consumed;  
The oranges had disappeared,  
The muslin bags all strewn.

But Eric's heart had ceased to pound  
And no one heard him sigh -  
There weren't enough to go around;  
He went to bed to cry.

He just could not believe his eyes  
When at last he woke;  
It took some time to realise  
That it was not some joke.

A heap of muslin bags were there,  
Arranged upon the bed;  
Each one assembled with great care  
And each one tied with thread.

As every bag he opened up,  
He smiled and felt so rich,  
For every child had offered up  
At least one segment each.

Eric coughed and wished me well;  
His tale had all been told.  
And as the evening darkness fell,  
I left him in the cold.

Now you might call me gullible  
If I believed one word.  
Though they might have been incredible,  
I loved the words I'd heard.

I'm not sure if I trusted him,  
But do I really care?  
He earned the feast I got for him...  
For that was only fair.



Sometimes, when I struggle with self-doubt, I remind myself what amazing creatures we are — each one of us makes about 35,000 conscious or semi-conscious decisions every day... But wait, what if they're all wrong?

## Holes in the Sky



There are holes in the sky  
Where the rain comes through.  
Yeah, it kinda bugs me  
And I bet it bugs you!

And they never get fixed;  
Nobody knows why,  
But it makes us all mad,  
If we cannot stay dry.

But I've got the answer -  
I think it's appealing!  
We'll do it the same way  
As fixing a ceiling!

You'll think I'm just crazy,  
As mad as a hatter -  
I need PVA glue  
And a great big ladder!

## Listening to the Stars

At times the whispers call to you,  
Murmuring through the night,  
Like thoughts upon a far-off shore,  
Fast ebbing out of sight.

No qualm of conscience burdens them.  
They mind not being heard,  
For all their undertones dissolve  
Like snowflakes undisturbed.

The fleeting breaths suggest once more  
A multitude of souls,  
Who vainly flee the hunter's spear,  
Where Orion now patrols.

But these sighs are tough as diamonds,  
Embroidered to evoke  
Mythologies of ancient times,  
Writ large on midnight's cloak.

Orion bestrides the inky sky,  
Locked in a timeless chase,  
Right at his heels his trusty dog,  
Forever keeping pace.

Not wary of the hanging moon,  
Not fleeting like the dew,  
These constants of the inky sky  
Are sure and tried and true.

When life seems so ephemeral,



Like shadows insecure,  
It helps to know that, like the stars,  
Great things do still endure.

## Just a Bad Week

Sometimes your days are back to front.  
You don't get any sleep -  
You're yawning in the daylight hours,  
At night you're counting sheep.

Some days come and stay too long  
And will not go away.  
They put their feet up on the couch,  
As if they mean to stay.

The other days are cruel to you  
And make your luck turn bad.  
The week becomes a tale of woe,  
The worst you've ever had.

They say that luck will even out,  
No need to fret or fear,  
For even if this stuff persists,  
A new week's nearly here!

## The Moth

A busy moth flutters,  
Luminous against the night.  
It seeks to flee the driving rain.  
For a moment it's lost from sight,  
But reappears, indoors,  
In brisk encounter with the light.  
Raps against it with muffled sound

And falls in a

spiral to the

ground

.

## My Heart



I wore my heart upon my sleeve.  
You could watch it dance and sing!

But often love is misperceived.  
Often sorrow does it bring.

And now my pain has no reprieve.  
Now my heart is in a sling.



What if hell actually freezes over one day? It would be pretty scary. At that moment, all those things that couldn't happen would suddenly happen.

## Never Met Anyone as Smart as You

*An ode to someone who passed a big exam.*

Beats me how you get all that stuff in your head,  
From early morning till it's time for bed.  
Others may try but they don't see it through.  
Never met anyone as clever as you.

From the banks of Loch Lomond to Timbuktu,  
The island of Zanzibar and Kathmandu,  
You crush all your exams like a coke can too!  
Never met anyone as clever as you.

I've heard about Goethe and Hippocrates,  
Leonardo and Einstein and Socrates.  
I can't understand all the hullabaloo -  
Never met anyone as clever as you.

I think we should celebrate, don't you agree?  
Let's have a party for just you and me!  
Why am I included? I haven't a clue!  
Never met anyone as clever as you.

But I have to tell you it's my fervent wish  
That you don't get any smarter than this,  
I so hope it never occurs to you  
That soon you'll be just as smart as *me* too!

## Nothing for Christmas

I got a friend of mine a gift.  
I thought she might be glad.  
I tied it with a bow so fine,  
But, hey, she just went mad!

'No, no! No gifts!' she said to me.  
'Please, please, just get me nothing.'  
At first I didn't understand -  
I thought she might be bluffing!

I went to town and found the store  
And marvelled at the shapes -  
All kinds of nothing piled up high,  
Right past the blinds and drapes.

They wrapped it up, I took it home,  
Wrote her name upon the tag.  
I was worried that it might escape,  
So I kept it in the bag.

A Christmas gift of nothing -  
Could anything be duller?  
Well, actually, I think it's cool -  
Just hope she likes the colour!

## The Speed of Dark

*Welcome to my dark side!*

You never did listen to those that would help.  
You never could share the things that you felt.  
You're all smoke and mirrors, you think we're just  
fools.  
You're never around when reality calls.

You think you're a victim but I just don't care.  
You let yourself go and no one knows where.  
Don't look for pity, you're in the wrong place.  
What good is a mirror if you don't show your face?

You say you feel trapped but you never get out.  
We can all hear you, you don't have to shout.  
I won't interfere and I won't intervene.  
You've got more issues than Time Magazine.

You like to pose questions but why should I care?  
I gave you the answers, you left them right there.  
You never say sorry, you don't have the grace.  
What good is a mirror if you don't show your face?

Are you waving or drowning? Nobody knows.  
You're in a place where nobody goes.  
Those sharks in the water are not out to play.  
You could be saved but you're swimming away.

Sometimes you have to be cruel to be kind.  
It tears at my heart to leave you behind.



You always said you just wanted some space.  
What good is a mirror if you don't show your face?

There's no trust in your eyes, not even a trace.  
You can't be a winner if you're not in the race.  
They say that a flame needs only a spark,  
But you disappear at the speed of dark.

## The Blind Man from Oban



There was a blind man from Oban  
Who frightened the folk in his clan -  
Went fishing for lobster  
Caught Nessie, the monster,  
And brought the beast home for the pan!

## Behind Every Cloud

*I don't usually have very profound thoughts, but sometimes I manage it. I think it would be useful if our profound thoughts were to rise up into the atmosphere and form special clouds - maybe orange and mauve stripey ones to differentiate them from ordinary rain ones. As they cool down, they would condense and fall down as written text that people could collect for future reference. I'd invent funnel-shaped hats and become rich.*

If my thoughts left my head in a cloud,  
People would stand and read them aloud,  
'They'd get soaked in the rain  
With the words from my brain -  
But some words would not be allowed!

## Two Tickets

Whatever we had then I'm sure that we've lost.  
It won't be no good if our paths ever cross.  
Have you said goodbye to the memories we share?  
Maybe you're bitter or maybe don't care.  
I was in a train station last night in a dream  
And I had two tickets to what might have been.

A cold wind was blowing and the sky was all black,  
I stood on the platform and stared at the track.  
The announcer said something and I turned away,  
For the message gets clearer with each passing day -  
Trains don't go backwards except when you dream  
And you can't take a ride to what might have been.

## Autumn

*The promise of woodland walks, a crescendo of colour, conker fights, the low sun dappled through the trees, lots of cosy evenings snuggled up at home... Nah! I've tried, but I've never really liked autumn.*

At the tips of naked branches,  
Orange leaves hang in clusters,  
Expecting to fall.  
The bracken crunches in protest  
At your intruding feet  
And the chestnuts fall.  
Day dissolves into hoary mists  
Over woods of all colours.  
A darkness will fall.

Forgive the miserly squirrel,  
Forgive the birds that don't sing,  
For Nature, embittered, grits her teeth  
At Winter's warning call.

*Okay, so...*

If my attempts to be poetic  
Turned out to be really pathetic,  
I cannot be lying  
When everything's dying -  
I just don't find autumn aesthetic.

## **Lack of Sleep**

One baking hot December day,  
Or it may have been in June,  
I think it was in the morning  
Or maybe the afternoon,  
I went to bed and shut my eyes,  
But being too tired to sleep,  
I ran and ran around a field  
And started to count the sheep.  
I wrote the number in my book  
Using invisible ink.  
By now I'd built up quite a thirst,  
But I didn't want to drink.  
All this is understandable  
For I hadn't slept a wink -  
Perhaps my brain was all worn out  
Or was I now too smart to think?



Recently, I started pondering about humanity. I think I was on my third ponder, when it hit me. Of course! To understand humanity you have to consider the word itself. It's basically made up of two separate words - 'huma' and 'nity'. But what do they mean? No one knows. They don't even mean anything in Latin. And so there you have it - that's why humanity is such a mystery to everybody.

## Human Turbojet

A friend of mine was quite unwell,  
Her tummy was upset.  
She couldn't help but burp and belch -  
A human turbojet.

She belched before the sun came up  
And belched at sunset time,  
She even belched on Sundays  
When all the church bells chime.

One day I went to call on her  
But couldn't find a soul.  
I phoned the missing persons desk  
And airport ground control.

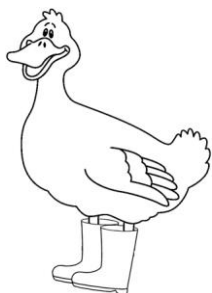
The doctor told her: "Mrs Smith,  
Be careful what you eat -  
I recommend this chilli dish.  
It's made of magic meat."

Well, the cure was quite successful,  
For ev'ry time she spoke,  
There was no belching any more -  
Her words went up in smoke!



## Pembrokeshire

*There's a Welsh saying relating to the weather in that part of the world: "If you can see the top of the mountain, it's about to rain. If you can't see the top of the mountain, it's already raining!"*



If it turns out sunny on the Pembrokeshire coast,  
I think you should write and complain -  
When you spend all your money on waterproof  
boots,  
It'd better flippin' well rain!

## **I'll Just Smile Because We Met**

My regrets go sore and fester.  
The painful words are those unsaid.  
It's no good wishing things were better,  
Now the tears have all been shed.

Times like these are like no others.  
I'm just a farmer in the storm.  
The darkest clouds loom high above me,  
Beating down the unripe corn.

Thoughts of you shine in the night sky.  
They can't help me find a way.  
My memories are reaching for you,  
But cannot bring you back today.

Sunset's come around too early,  
But the stars do not forget.  
And I won't cry because you're gone now,  
I'll just smile because we met.



I like to swim in the mystery of life until I'm completely soaked, then I like to dry off in the warm glow of something perfectly obvious. You can't stay mysterious for too long. You get all pruned and wrinkly.

## Are You a Martian?

*Life on Earth began around 3.8 billion years ago, but it may not have originated on our planet. There is growing scientific support for a theory known as panspermia that suggests life first started elsewhere in space and was carried here by comets and meteorites. Scientists have discovered amino acids in meteorites that landed on the surface of the Earth. In Antarctica, for example, they have identified a meteorite that was definitely launched from Mars many millions of years ago. They know it's from Mars because its composition matches up with the composition of the Martian surface and it also contains bubbles of gas that correspond to the chemical and isotopic composition of gases in the Martian atmosphere.*

How did life start on planets like ours?  
Could it be microbes came from the stars?  
For life's building blocks  
Are found in old rocks  
That appear to have travelled from Mars.

To be honest I don't have a clue  
If the theory is actually true,  
But if it's not lies,  
I won't be surprised...  
I've had my suspicions 'bout you!

## **My Exercise Regime**

I'd like to be more healthy  
I've put on too much weight  
I think I'll do more exercise  
I'll start by running late

I'll get into hot water  
I'm really good at that  
I'll fly right off the handle  
Onto my yoga mat

I'll jump to some conclusions  
I'm good at skipping chores  
After lunch it's diddly-squats  
I'll do them round at yours

I'll dodge responsibility  
As long as it don't hurt  
Then I'll stretch the truth a bit  
And maybe dig some dirt

I'll carry lots of grudges  
Go skating on thin ice  
And just in case that's not enough  
Repeat the whole thing twice!



Reality, like life itself, is what you make it.  
Unfortunately, I can't make it at all today as I've  
got a dental appointment.

## Hamish and the Scottish Antid-oat

Poor Hamish was contagious.  
He had the Scottish flu.  
His skin had turned to tartan,  
His hair and toenails too!

"Noo jist haud on!" the doctor said,  
"It's gaein be awright!  
Jus' soak your skin in porridge  
All day and overnight."

He duly smeared his face and hands,  
His hair and toenails too.  
By midnight he was so improved,  
He felt like someone new.

But soon he grew suspicious -  
He didn't know for sure  
If porridge masked the problem  
Or really was a cure.

The doctor reassured him:  
"Aye, it's an antidote!  
But if yon tartan reappears  
You'll need a second coat."

## Procrastination

They say that I procrastinate  
But that's not strictly true.  
I simply like to contemplate  
What else I'd like to do.

In time the stuff will all get done,  
Who cares about the date?  
I've heard them say that good things come  
To those prepared to wait!

There *is* a trick, I must admit,  
And, if you will allow,  
I'll tell you all about it...  
But maybe not right now!



## Catharsis

We praise ourselves for being strong  
And quell the pain we feel.  
We think our sadness must be wrong  
And forge our hearts of steel.

Some people do this really well,  
The heart's ruled by the head.  
The one's who do it best of all  
Are people who are dead.

Emotions are a normal thing  
And it's okay to cry.  
Storing feelings in a bottle  
Is bound to go awry.

I think it's best to open hearts  
And let them have their say.  
No one ever freed a pain  
By locking it away.

## **Digging a Hole**

Monday to Friday, I dig a hole.  
Dig dig dig dig dig.  
Saturdays and Sundays, I dig some more.  
Dig dig dig dig dig.

*Okay, probably not the most beautiful poem ever,  
but you've got to admit.... it's deep.*



Of course there's a god – when day breaks,  
someone always fixes it! Sorry. That started out as  
a really profound thought, but it was *so* deep, by  
the time I pulled it out, it had got all lumpy and  
squished.

## Cyberchondria

*Cyberchondria is the internet-induced phenomenon whereby people obsessively search the internet about their health anxieties.*

It could be bovine spongiform  
Or restless legs disease.  
My symptoms differ from the norm -  
It could be *both* of these.

It could be a bulbous iris  
Or wobbly spinal cord.  
But it can't be West Nile Virus -  
I've never been abroad.

Could be white nose syndrome,  
But, hey, I'm not a bat.  
It's not a mutant chromosome  
Or anything like that.

So, it seems self-diagnosis  
Is quite a dodgy thing,  
For I suppose it could be just...  
A pimple on my chin?

## Earth Aligned with Mars

A fragment of a rainbow  
Is melting in my hand,  
The ambient dark must soon give up  
Its diamond grains of sand.

Everything is transient  
And nothing's meant to last,  
Everything's just flakes of snow  
That come and go so fast.

Dizzy now, I tip my head  
And drink the milk of stars  
And wonder what it signifies  
When Earth's aligned with Mars.

This is quite beyond my grasp,  
Just things I can't control.  
If I could only understand  
And see inside your soul.

Is that your face I see up there  
In constellations bright?  
Will anything remain at all  
When darkness turns to light?

Your fleeting image wavers  
Upon the ice below,  
So fragile and ephemeral...  
And I must let you go.



I've noticed there's been a proliferation of cookery on TV and I'm worried that it will cause cookery on the streets. The last thing we need is innocent pedestrians being whisked away by gangs of sous chefs. I think TV glamourises cookery. And the consequences of digesting food are rarely depicted.

## **The Shopaholic**

A friend of mine went shopping once.  
She didn't know what for,  
But somehow she'd convinced herself  
She needed one thing more.

She started on a Saturday  
And went from store to store.  
By Friday she was tired out -  
Her feet were really sore.

She didn't know what she wanted;  
Perhaps she never will.  
Although the shops are boarded up,  
They say she's out there still.

## **My Shoulder Blades are Missing!**

My shoulder blades are missing!  
I don't know where they are.  
They might be in the bathroom -  
They can't have gone too far.

Did I have them yesterday?  
I'm pretty sure I did.  
The last time they went missing  
They turned up in Madrid.

They've been on two safaris,  
And cruised around the Med  
And skied on the Matterhorn  
And shopped in Maidenhead.

I'm never gonna find them,  
I think that's understood.  
I'll have to get replacements -  
I think they're gone for good.

Where do you get new shoulders?  
They must be strong and broad.  
I'll get them in Ikea -  
The best I can afford.

I don't want self-assembly,  
I'd never get it right.  
There'd be a piece left over  
And I'd be up all night.

I'll try them out tomorrow  
Or maybe Wednesday.



I'll act like I don't care at all -  
Make sure they shrug okay.

I won't take any chances -  
I'll use the strongest tape,  
Nuts and bolts and superglue.  
The new ones won't escape!

## The Wall of Doom

*Using a tennis practice wall (or backboard) is one of the best possible ways to improve your game. Really?*

Something lurks behind the trees,  
Beneath the midnight moon.  
It makes me feel so ill at ease -  
The evil wall of doom.

By daylight, it seems harmless,  
But do not be deceived.  
It sneers at all your efforts  
And makes you feel aggrieved.

By night, it seems to represent  
The entrance to a tomb,  
Where many wretched ghosts lament  
And curse the wall of doom.

And though your best shots pepper it,  
It won't let you improve.  
Just when you think you've bettered it,  
The white line seems to move.

You reenact your worst defeats;  
You can't escape the gloom.  
No one smiles for no one beats  
The dreaded wall of doom.

Even the wall of Jericho  
Was smashed and broken up.  
Shall we send ours to Mexico

Addressed to Donald Trump?

No, maybe we should let it rot;  
The mortar will crack soon.  
And then we'll hit our hardest shots  
And beat the wall of doom!



I'd follow my dreams, but I strongly suspect they don't know the way.

## At Your Disposal

I ripped the knees of my best blue jeans  
When I was just a kid.  
I threw them out with the household trash -  
Can't believe I did!  
My mum just stood there sighing  
With a needle and a thread.  
I guess I never listened to a single word she said.

I met a girl - lived down the street -  
And we became good friends.  
We fought one night, I don't know why.  
I told her it must end.  
Well she just stood there crying  
And her heart it must have bled.  
I guess I never listened to a single word she said.

Now the boot is on the other foot  
And you've walked out the door.  
My heart knows there's another way.  
It's irony for sure  
That I've just stood here swearing  
That our love cannot be dead  
And you've refused to listen to a single word I've  
said.

## Life Through the Rear View Mirror

My concept of time soon departed  
When Gemma was learning to drive.  
I didn't know when we'd get started,  
I didn't know when we'd arrive.

Well I think what caused my confusion  
Was all the time we spent in reverse.  
It created a kind of illusion  
Of a rear-facing universe.

There weren't any other big factors -  
It's not like she drove very fast,  
But hour after hour we went backwards  
Like travelling into the past.

Car parks now send me all crazy  
As I manoeuvre into a bay.  
The clock on the dash goes all hazy  
And I plunge into yesterday.

So it's really become a dilemma,  
I'm puzzled and dazed and bemused,  
Just thinking 'bout driving with Gemma  
Has got me mixed up and confused.

Is this the start or end of the poem?  
Did I somehow write in reverse?  
Not sure if I'm coming or going...  
You might have to read this bit first.

## Food for Thought



One day it just happened to me -  
I ate a thesaurus for tea!  
I choked on a noun,  
It wouldn't stay down -  
An attack of hyperbole!

The long words would not go away;  
I knew what the doctor would say -  
"Don't grimace or frown;  
You must swallow down  
A spoonful of Tipp-Ex each day!"



Are we ever going to make any progress when our scientists are so clumsy? They've broken new ground, cracked the genetic code and split the atom.



## Tuesdays

Nothing ever happens on Tuesdays,  
So I have nothing to write.  
I don't recommend that you read this;  
Just do it to be polite?

Tuesdays aren't at the end of the week,  
Nor are they right at the start;  
They're not even bang in the middle -  
It's like they're right off the chart.

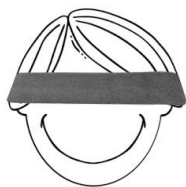
A Tuesday would be so much better  
If it would make up its mind,  
And sneak in right next to a Thursday  
Or leave the weekdays behind.

I think they're in need of a rescue  
Or else they'll just fade away.  
We could all agree to make Tuesday  
National Bubble Bath Day.

We could act like penguins on Tuesdays  
And hop and waddle and slide.  
We could drink all our drinks with chopsticks  
And wear pyjamas outside.

But the truth is, Tuesday's are boring,  
They don't delight or enthrall.  
Weekends would come around quicker if....  
We don't have Tuesdays at all!

## Awesome Sports Accessories



I got a new grip for my racket.  
It seemed like a sensible plan.  
It cost me an absolute packet  
And came all the way from Taiwan.  
It fell off the first time I used it,  
So I guess I'm not really a fan.

The next thing I got was a headband,  
To keep the hair out of my face.  
It was made by one of the top brands,  
So I entered myself in a race,  
But it slipped and I had to use both hands  
Just to keep the damn thing in its place.

I got me a waterproof sports cap  
So I wouldn't miss out on a game.  
I got soaked the last time I used it -  
The holes in it are really a shame.  
You might ask me why did I wear it -  
Well... I just didn't think it would rain!



If you're going boating, it's probably a good idea to carry a swimming hat folded up in your pocket. If you fall in, you put on the hat while you're underwater and then come up to the surface, swimming all nonchalantly as if you meant to do it all along.

## Big Mac and Fries

Valentine's Day and the card shops are closed;  
I found some roses but they look decomposed.  
You'll like this song, it's so subtle and deep.  
It's got the words that will make your heart leap.  
You won't want chocolates or a fine diamond ring.  
You'll know my heart when I walk up and sing:

We're like Barbie and Ken, cow pats and flies,  
Laurel and Hardy, Morecambe and Wise.  
We fit together like a big mac and fries.

You're always saying that romance is dead,  
Flowers forgotten and verses unread.  
I wrote this song to show it ain't true.  
I've found the words to describe me and you.  
So we don't need Shelley and we don't need Keats.  
I'll sing out loud in the roads and the streets:

We're like Barbie and Ken, cow pats and flies,  
Laurel and Hardy, Morecambe and Wise.  
We fit together like a big mac and fries.

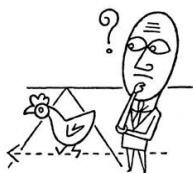
## A Cigarette

Had no sleep for days now,  
He taps his bayonet.  
Despite his shaking fingers,  
He lights a cigarette.

Picks up the sound of wailing.  
Old man staggers from a tent,  
Turns red eyes to the soldier,  
Breaks off his sad lament.

'There's gunfire in the city.  
Both seem to just forget.  
Sat together by the roadside,  
They share a cigarette.

## Why Did the Chicken Cross the Road?



A chicken crossed the road one day  
It wasn't clear what for.  
Sometimes it's good to walk the way  
You've never walked before.

Before she'd gotten very far  
She wandered to the right.  
She could have got to Potters Bar  
Before the morning light.

Perhaps there was a roundabout,  
Perhaps she took a fork,  
Perhaps her little legs gave out  
And just refused to walk.

There could have been a pothole there,  
Or puddles oh so deep.  
Perhaps she said a quiet prayer  
And drifted off to sleep.

She might have tried some yoga too,  
Went hopping with a frog?  
She could have lit a barbecue  
Or started up a blog.

The question's asked throughout the land:  
Why did she go across?  
The people want to understand.  
They're wholly at a loss.

Perhaps inside she'd heard the call  
That told her just to dare,  
For sometimes surely don't we all  
Get tired of standing there?

But it's so inconsequential,  
Our logic's misapplied -  
Is it always so essential  
To reach the other side?

## **The End**

Now that you've come to the end of the book,  
I hope that you didn't take too long a look.  
I'm sorry, my friends,  
I can't make amends -  
You'll never get back the time that it took.



# INDEX

<b>A Cigarette .....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Andromeda.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Are You a Martian? .....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>At Your Disposal.....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Autumn.....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Awesome Sports Accessories .....</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Beans on Toast .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Behind Every Cloud .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Big Mac and Fries.....</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Carrie's Magic Flask of Tea .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Catharsis.....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Cyberchondria .....</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>Digging a Hole.....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Earth Aligned with Mars .....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Eric and the Christmas Orange .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Food for Thought.....</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Hamish and the Scottish Antid-oat .....</b>	<b>63</b>

<b>Holes in the Sky .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Human Turbojet.....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>I'll Just Smile Because We Met.....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Just a Bad Week .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Lack of Sleep.....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Life Through the Rear View Mirror .....</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Listening to the Stars .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>My Doomy Gloomy Universe .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>My Exercise Regime .....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>My Heart .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>My Shoulder Blades are Missing! .....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Never Met Anyone as Smart as You .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Nothing for Christmas .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Pembrokeshire.....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Procrastination .....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Sand Creek.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Social Media and the Fruit Fly.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>That'll be Me.....</b>	<b>21</b>

<b>The Blind Man from Oban .....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>The End .....</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>The Headless Pigeon.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>The Lie.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>The Martian .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>The Missing Moon .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>The Moth .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>The Olive Branch.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>The Shopaholic.....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>The Speed of Dark .....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>The Swallow .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>The Time Travel Paradox.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>The Wall of Doom.....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>To Bee or not to Bee .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>To Boldly Go .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Tuesdays.....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Two Tickets .....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>We Shall Never Surrender.....</b>	<b>25</b>

**Why Did the Chicken Cross the Road? ..... 86**

## **Other books by David Winship**

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